

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed January 5, 2004 has been reviewed and carefully considered. Dependent claims 4-15 have been added. Independent claims 1-3 are now amended. Claims 1-15 are now pending. Reconsideration of the above-identified application, as herein amended and in view of the following remarks, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,341,040 to Tai et al. ("Tai").

Claim 1 has been amended to recite:

coupled to the interleaving means, an output terminal without forward connection, to which output of at least an additional channel for an additional, interleaved optical signal is to be coupled, for future connection of the terminal to an additional demultiplexer in the event the system is expanded so as to provide said forward connection.

The amendment of claim 1 finds support in the specification (e.g., page 6, lines 17-18; page 7, lines 9-11; page 8, lines 14-15; page 9, lines 16-19).

Tai, by contrast, fails to disclose or suggest a system that features at least one multiplexer/demultiplexer pair and the "output terminal without forward connection" described in claim 1 of the present invention.

Claim 2 is similar to claim 1 and features the same above-quoted amendment.

Claim 3 is a process claim corresponding to the manufacture claims 1 and

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2, and likewise features the "output terminal without forward connection" in addition to at least one multiplexer/demultiplexer pair.

Claims 1-3 are therefore believed to distinguish patentably over Tai.

Dependent claims 4-15 have been added to emphasize aspects of what the applicants regard to be the invention. Claims 4-15 find support in FIGs. 6 and 7 and accompanying text in the specification, including the above-mentioned passages mentioned with regard to claim 1-3.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is believed that this application is now in condition for allowance. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned in the event of any perceived outstanding issues so that passage of the case to issue can be effected without the need for a further Office Action.

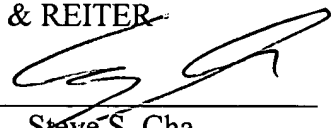
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In the event that any additional fee is required to continue the prosecution of this Application as requested, please charge such fee to Deposit Account No. 502-470.

Respectfully submitted,

CHA & REITER


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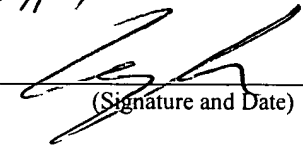
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